

Prison News Service

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Number 21

Camp Hill Conflagration

On Wednesday 25/Oct/89 what the Pennsylvania information monopoly described as a "disturbance" occurred at the medium security Camp Hill Correctional Facility, four miles west of the state capital, Harrisburg. According to frequently incredible official sources, prisoners took over at least one cell block, did some fire and other damage, and supposedly injured some 44 staff members. Order was purportedly restored that same night with only seven prisoners being injured (riiight!).

The very next night, however, the uprising resumed, officials alleging that the wily prisoners had somehow used stolen tools or keys to get out of the cells. How this happened in the midst of the lockdown that inevitably follows events such as those of the previous night remains unexplained. Why it occurred is apparently because a meeting to discuss prisoners' grievances that had been promised in order to end the previous night's demonstration failed to materialize.

During the Thursday uprising, prisoners seized a large part of the prison, controlling at least seven cell blocks. Twelve of the prison's 31 buildings were burned, including the furniture factory, commissary, kitchen, and eight structures erected as temporary cell blocks. Five hostages were taken and one guard was stabbed, though employees were not the action's target and the injured were released immediately. The action was seemingly intended primarily to gain public attention and sympathy for prisoner grievances stemming from the increasingly draconian policies of officialdom and overcrowding as well as to show that such

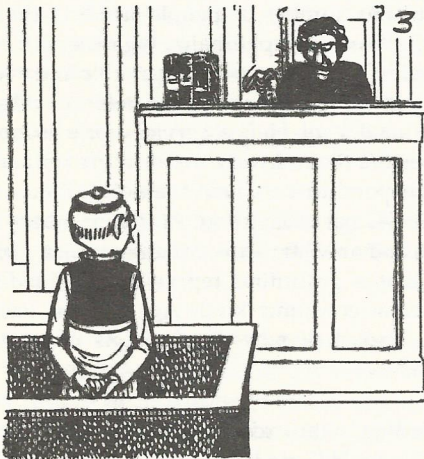
oppressive conditions are not without costs. In an understandable effort to exit their oppression, some prisoners also tried to crash a truck through a back gate.

While the immediate precipitator of the second uprising may have been official arrogance in refusing to honour so meager a pledge as one for a discussion meeting with the warden, the real causes of the unrest are much deeper. Changes in food and medical policies are all that are cited by official sources in their effort to downplay the rationality and reality of prisoners' grievances and to hide the legitimacy of their protest. But the limited information available does allow some insights. At a population of 2067, Camp Hill is a reported 48% overcrowded. Budgets are not increasing in step with the explosion in prison overcrowding, nor are the facilities that provide essential services expanding according to the number of people needing them. Security staff and paraphernalia, regardless of excess or uselessness, are sacred, uncuttable and even needlessly increased, much like the defense budget on the national level. Hence, services for prisoners decline despite their already under-representation in prison expenditures. Given the political atmosphere, official paranoia about larger numbers of prisoners, and atavistic attitudes among many prisonrats, alot of gratuitous repression is added to the incidental economic kind. Against this backdrop, the impact of new deprivations is greatly magnified.

According to the exceedingly few details coming out of Camp Hill, medical policy was changed so

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as to decrease access to health care for prisoners. This amounted to an attack on prisoners' very lives at a time when they have more and more serious medical problems with more of them coming from communities that have grown poorer and most distant from health services during nine years of Reaganism. The danger is compounded by the crowding. Its physiological impact is enhanced by the diminished educational, recreational and occupational opportunities that increase idleness as well as by ever larger sentences. And that is on top of the physical suffering of having to endure treatable illness/injury.

Only slightly more information has been revealed about the contribution of the food policy changes to the takeover. One change is that prisoners' relatives will no longer be allowed to bring food to the long standing practice of "twice-a-year family picnics". Now the picnics will be limited to a few junk-food selections from machines. This is much more than an assault on the prisoners' diets; more importantly, it is an attack on their connections with their families and communities. It is a deliberate and callous control tactic that serves only the purposes of the repressive apparatus. People without community and familial support may be easier to manipulate and coerce, but it is much more difficult to reintegrate prisoners who have been thus isolated into the free society when they are released. Even some Camp Hill prison officials agree on the great importance of this family day for prisoners and the impropriety of new policies curtailing it and imposing other new food restrictions.

Another reported aspect of the food fiasco was the elimination of food packages. Given the marginality of most prison diets, food packages from home are often important supplements, and prisoners come to rely on them to maintain their health and physical condition. This is especially true where there is rapid population growth; food service frequently takes the first and disproportionate hits of budgetary restraints despite constituting only about 5 per cent of prison budgets. Suddenly, however, officialdom decreed food packages to be dangerous sources of contraband. The truth is that they are exactly the very minor vectors of contraband they always have been — and even less so given the increasing sophistication of search equipment and techniques. Verily, the events of 25-27/Oct show that the deprivation was a far greater security threat than whatever bits of petty contraband may have been smuggled. Increased package inspection would be the logical response to more prisoners receiving more packages, but prisonrats do not want that burden despite the now even more obvious benefits of the package privilege. Instead, they opted for mass punishment on a pretext. Moreover, the apparatus wants to run a gulag of completely powerless and dependent prisoners in secrecy and isolation. Camp Hill turned out to be an overstep toward that goal. Nor was Camp Hill the only Pennsylvania prison at

which new policies and oppressive conditions instigated trouble. Two days before the Wednesday revolt, there was a three hour rebellion at Huntington State Prison 100 miles to the west in which 29 guards and nineteen prisoners were reportedly hurt. And over the weekend of 28/Oct there was a large demonstration at a Philadelphia prison in which prisoners chanted, "Camp Hill! Camp Hill!"

Official reaction to the Camp Hill uprising was demonstrative of intransigent and totalitarian attitudes. At dawn on Friday, 27/Oct, guards and state troopers stormed the prisoner held blocks, indiscriminately firing tear gas and automatic weapons. Two prisoners were shot. The only change announced in the aftermath to alleviate the flash-point conditions has been that some 900 prisoners, roughly a third of the population, are to be transferred. It is unlikely that any will find themselves in improved circumstances. Officials are quick to decry such hard line tactics "over there", but seek to justify their use of the same and worse by describing this situation as a riot exclusively the fault of the nasty prisoners. The real responsibility, however, is directly attributed to official policies and practices of repression, but those of the prisonocracy and the larger political apparatus that feeds it. Without substantive change — change the present system is incapable of providing — we can only expect more Camp Hills. ∞

Freedom When?

The National Campaign for Amnesty and Human Rights for Political Prisoners, which goes by the short title "Freedom Now!" is having its share of difficulties in getting organized. Given the lack of cohesion, limited commitment and competing currents within the U.S. left, this is understandable for any national endeavor, particularly one that requires the melding of such disparate forces as does the issue of political prisoners. But when the difficulties encountered by a nascent organization rise to the point of preventing effective action and/or risking counterproductive results, it is time to retrench: to recognize that "going public" was premature and to take the effort back into privacy where its problems can be resolved for a stronger start later. This is especially true for an organization such as Freedom Now! (FN) that apparently purports to set movement policy in so vital an area as the representation of political prisoners generally.

FN's inclination/ability to communicate has not been good, particularly with the prisoners who are supposed to be the subject

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of its work. Verily, it decided to eliminate the "commission" intended to represent them from its bureaucracy. Hence it is impossible to know in the depths of dungeon Marion from the organization itself whether the following accurately portrays the circumstances. But much of the information of which the conclusions and analysis are the logical product come from credible sources to whom it apparently travelled by word of mouth. Some of it came from the document included in FN mailings. In a vacuum, one has to work with the material available.

FN seems to have decided upon some unduly narrow and exclusionary definition of what constitutes a political prisoner. It did so largely in isolation and without approval of the majority of the people involved in the issue, let alone a consensus. Moreover, FN is planning to take unilateral action on the basis of its definition, most egregiously, the deletion of some people from future editions of *Can't Jail the Spirit*, a compilation of biographies of political prisoners. That might be alright if FN were establishing a defense or representation committee for particular people it wants to support and billing it as such. But it isn't. By "certifying" or "adopting" some prisoners as political and "decertifying" others (contrary to FN's protests that it is not decertifying anyone, it is defacto), it is attempting to write out of existence things and people that exist. That makes not only FN look silly, but also those who are associated with it through the issue. By this action, FN is also attempting to define what constitutes acceptable line and means of struggle and making those opinions determinative of whether a victim of the repressive apparatus is a political prisoner or a criminal. It has no brief or legitimacy to do that, to say that its politics are the only politics, for anyone but itself. It needs to incorporate into its work the realization that recognition of political prisoners does not necessarily require support and acceptance of their deeds, tactics or politics, just acknowledgement of their political status.

The problem with *Can't Jail the Spirit* is even more immediate. The elimination of anyone other than at his or her request would be a serious insult, a denigration of the risk that person had assumed in being included and a slap at the segment of the broad movement for the most equitable social reality with which the person is

identified. The very inclusion of the people in the first and second editions indicate that there is at least enough debate about their status to warrant their inclusion. Their decertification would also be a bad advertisement, a demonstration of the lack of seriousness with which our side of the barricade (and FN is avowedly left, albeit decreasingly radical) views its activists, its most valuable resource.

FN is having other problems, too. It was unable to send anyone to the UN conference on political prisoners in Geneva, something that would seem an elementary move for such an organization, even if it meant collecting recyclable cans for the fare. The implications of its rare and untimely mailings are of chronic financial insufficiency down to its most basic necessities and locational, structural and active indecision stemming largely from it. Political uncertainty allows credibility damaging (or possibly otherwise harmful) inconsistency like the apparent liberal drift exemplified by FN's desire to emulate Amnesty International. That would certainly be deradicalizing and more likely to lead to the delegitimization of some essential forms of struggle, especially armed struggle. And it would tend to support the state's criminalization of people imprisoned as those form's alleged practioners and supporters more than it would raise consciousness of political prisoners in the American Gulag Archipelago. Another extremely important consequence of the political weakness is that it attracts and engenders the divisive bickering for which the American left is so notorious and by which it is so fragmented and debilitated. By trying to limp along in a vehicle so overburdened, FN risks producing a net loss.

FN is pursuing a laudable and much neglected objective. There is nothing to suggest that the intent of its people is not commendable and demonstrative of commitment. The questions that arise concern their execution of the organizational tasks requisite to realizing the issue's potential without damaging the struggle, not their motivation. The evidence indicates that FN needs to strengthen its base, establish better connections with its target community, develop its theory and structure and assemble the economic and material ante for its activity. It is thus that i can build to the summit it has

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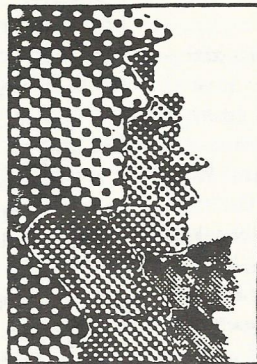
Police Shooting Protested

The Black community and women's movement in Toronto are organizing together in response to Toronto-area police's latest act of gratuitous oppressive violence, the October 27 shooting of Sophia Cook. Cook, 23, is the third Black person to be shot by police in the Metro area in the last 15 months, and the only one to survive. Cook was shot at point-blank range in the side by a traffic cop, Cameron Durham. Durham had flagged down the car in which Cook was travelling with two men, on suspicion that it was stolen. Contrary to initial police and media reports of an "altercation" during the course of which the officer's gun was "discharged", the two men fled when Durham leaned into the car window and shot Cook who was still wearing her seatbelt. She may never walk again.

The community organizing in response to Cook's is of a level and intensity unprecedented in Toronto in recent years. The Black Action Defence Committee (BADC) is mobilizing the African community and pressing its interests in the media and courts. But a new diverse and active Women's Coalition Against Racist and Police Violence has come together. The Women's Coalition is led by feminist women of colour and is made up of individuals representing upwards of 30 organizations in Toronto (including Bulldozer). It has already organized two demonstrations at Metro Toronto Police Headquarters (the second of which was co-sponsored by BADC) and a petition campaign.

This is the first time feminists of colour and white feminists have worked together in a public way and on Black community issues since women of colour en masse rejected the white women's leadership several years ago. Since then, groups of women of colour have been defining their issues and gathering their strengths, and groups of white women have been confronting their own racism. The Women's Coalition is aware that in organizing against racist and police violence it is not starting anything new, but is joining in a fight that is already being waged by Black and other communities of colour and by the First Nations.

The Sophia Cook shooting was a catalyst for this women's organizing, not just because Cook is a woman, but because of the sexism of the police and media reports. Like Michael Wade Lawson, a young Black man shot dead by police late last year, Cook is portrayed not as a victim of police violence but as someone who was somewhere she



shouldn't have been. But this is particularly pernicious in Cook's case, since Cook had accepted a ride from two men, one of whom she knew slightly and the other not at all. They had offered her a ride as she stood waiting for a bus. The message for women is clear, and especially for women of colour: if you accept a ride with strangers, you deserve what you get. And of course the racist media will not acknowledge the fact that the entire incident took place in the Jane-Finch area, a ghetto of housing projects, subject to continual police harassment and surveillance, conveniently placed in the suburbs where the inner-city yuppies won't have to see it and where the buses are few and far between.

The Women's Coalition was also no doubt catalyzed by increasing awareness of police violence against women. It is not just the lack of police re-

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Activists Counter Grand Jury

by Bulldozer

Two long time anti-racist activists claimed victory as they turned aside an apparently clumsy attempt by a grand jury to get information about the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee (JBAKC). Henry Bortman and Bob Wells were originally asked to provide JBAKC stationary, leaflets and newspapers in order to investigate death threats that had been sent to the U.S. Attorney General's office in Chicago. In addition Wells was asked to testify before the grand jury and provide samples of his fingerprints, saliva and handwriting. The state linked the two men to the group because their names were on record for the group's post office boxes.

According to the *Gay Community News* (GCN) the two men refused to meet the demands saying that the grand jury was more interested in political intimidation than in investigating a crime. The FBI admitted that the letterhead was fake. Moreover, the literature requested was generally available at local bookstores. The original demands were later reduced to simply "some literature".

Bortman told the GCN that he chose not to comply with the grand jury request because he thinks the juries have been used by the government to threaten political activists. Since the Nixon administration "the anti-war, Puerto Rican Independence, Black Nationalist, women's, lesbian and gay" movements had come under this legal attack. "It's a good tool because it's the place they can make you talk about anything

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An Open Letter to Bob Wells and Henry (Camo) Bortman

We have heard about the government's attempts to get you to collaborate with a political witch hunting grand jury, originating in Chicago and investigating the John Brown Anti-Klan Committee. We have also heard that you intend to resist this government attack against the anti-racist and anti-imperialist struggle.

Brothers, we want to personally and publically commend you and support you in the correct and righteous stance you are taking. There is never a "good" or "easy" time to face the prospect of captivity. But there are issues and principles that are worth fighting and risking one's freedom and even life for. As political prisoners, we have been through some of the worst prisons the u.s. government has. And even while human rights violations abound and political prisoners are singled out for abuse, it is not only necessary but possible to survive the u.s. empire's camps and continue to resist and remain an active part of the Freedom Struggle.

As we have all come to understand, grand juries and so called judicial investigations of political organizations and movements, are intelligence gathering operations as well as assaults against us. These attacks are designed to test the depth and strength of our principles, determination and ability to cope. It is only by immediately and firmly refusing to collaborate with the government's efforts, that we can not only withstand the attacks, but that as people and organizations we can actually overcome and grow from them.

Besides refusing to assist the grand jury, it is necessary to expose the government and to call on the people and left to support the resisters. We want to add our voices and call on all revolutionary and progressive organizations and people to support Bob and Camo and to learn from their principled and correct stand. In Unity there is Strength—in Strength there is Victory!

Amanda

*Jaen Karl Laaman Ohio-7 political prisoner
Leonard Peltier Native American Political prisoner
Larry Giddings Anti-authoritarian political prisoner
Leavenworth prison — Oct. 3, 1989*

International Notes

FRAME UP ADMITTED: The Guildford Four are Irish people who were accused of bombing a pub in England in 1974. They were snatched during a wave of anti-Irish sentiment that made almost any violations of Irish people's rights acceptable. The four were framed and sent to prison for life, evidence of their innocence notwithstanding. A broad and deep campaign developed to overturn the convictions so blatantly based on falsification of evidence and statements made under torture. Finally, after fifteen years of struggle and confronted by overwhelming evidence, the Thatcher government released the four, admitting in Parliament that the police had lied and set up the convictions. Nothing has been said about compensation for the four — not that any could repay fifteen years of hard time — or what will be done about the official who orchestrated the set-up, several of whom have climbed high on the civil service ladder.

POLITICAL REPRESSION: An article in a recent edition of *The Guardian* noted that Geronimo Pratt, a political prisoner who has served over 20 years on a demonstrated frame-up, had been transferred from San Quentin prison near San Francisco to the more repressive and remote Folsom prison. Officials gave as the reason that San Quentin had been downgraded to medium security and Geronimo needs maximum. In reality, the move was an obvious ploy to interfere with the fast growing campaign for his release — which has support even among San Quentin officials — by moving him away from the San Francisco Bay Area and imposing more restrictions on him.

DEADLY EXTRADITION: On 26/Oct/89, the Canadian government announced that it would seek to extradite Charles Ng, wanted in the U.S. for mass murder, for which he could face the death penalty. The decision was made by Justice Minister Douglas Lewis. Ng's lawyer said that an appeal would be made to the Canadian Supreme Court, which is already considering the similar case of Joseph Kindler, an escapee from a death sentence in Pennsylvania. The Canadian-U.S. extradition treaty allows either government to refuse to return suspects without guarantees that the death penalty will not be applied. Anti-death penalty people oppose the extradition but the government is seeking to use the case to soften opposition to the death penalty with scare tactics that Canada would become a haven for American murders. Any extradition is inappropriate,

however, given the U.S. government's willingness to lie to secure it, as demonstrated in the case of Leonard Peltier.

From a Canadian perspective the extradition of Ng gives the lie to the carefully constructed image of Canada as a haven from repressive regimes and policies around the world. The abolition of the death penalty in Canada was confirmed by a surprisingly large majority in a Parliamentary vote in 1987. But that has not stopped Canada from sending refugees back to their probable deaths in El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Sudan and many other places. So sending alleged killers back to the U.S. won't bother the decision-makers. Ng, accused of some rather vile sex-torture killings, has been well chosen since few people have come to the defense of the basic rule of law that no one should be returned to their possible deaths.

ATTICA AFTERMATH: The 26/Oct/89 *New York Times* reported that the State Supreme Court has upheld judgements in favour of people killed and injured during the police massacre that ended the Attica prison uprising. 29 prisoners and 10 guards were killed in a blizzard of police sniper fire on 13/Sept/71. The court approved a group of meager judgements totaling 1.3 million, saying that the police had used excessive force in ending the rebellion so murderously. It took eighteen years to reach that obvious conclusion. The state, of course, disagrees and has announced that it will appeal the ruling, likely meaning at least another decade of litigation. The length of time required for so much as even this slight admission of excess and the state's unwillingness to accept it demonstrate the bankruptcy of litigation for prisoners and the real value of the right to petition for redress of grievances.

CEML CONFERENCE: On 4/Nov/89, the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML) will have its annual commemoration of the passage of yet another year of lockdown at usp Marion; the seventh year began on 27/Oct. The focus of this year's event will be the racist use of the criminal "justice"

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Political Repression via Imprisonment

The Western political establishment likes to stroke itself and delude those it exploits with the fiction that its police and prison apparatus serves only a criminal function and never a political one. The following excerpt, reprinted from the July-August edition of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party Group based in London, was written by Rab Henry, a prisoner in the infamous H-blocks of Long Kesh prison in Northern Ireland. There, many Irish Republican prisoners are held for participation in the struggle to build a united Ireland free of British occupation. Rab's piece provides a graphic illustration of the political use of imprisonment clothed in legalisms by British authorities in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is under the direct occupation and rule of Britain, supposedly the font of Anglo-American notions of justice. It must be remembered that under British rule in Northern Ireland, no-jury courts are used and convictions are frequently based on the uncorroborated stories of paid perjurers; these courts are also permitted to presume guilt from defendants' refusal to speak during police interrogation. Rab's comments:

"Ostensibly the British government and the NIO (Northern Ireland Office) portray the LSRB (Life Sentence Review Board) process as 'non-political and impartial and there to assess individual cases on individual merits, for release.' However, it is a device which allows the NIO to manipulate releases for political ends.

"Of the 203 Republican life prisoners: two are into their 17th year of imprisonment; 14-16th; 9-15th; 21-14th; 28-13th; 31-12th; 15-11th. The review procedure itself is highly secretive, arbitrary and subjectively biased. The yearly reports on individual prisoners are drawn up by prison officers and governors who are ex-members of the B-specials, UDR, RUC, [B-specials, Ulster Defense Regiment, Royal Ulster Constabulary, police agencies in Northern Ireland — ed.], British army, etc... When the prisoner's case is reviewed by the LSRB at the ten year stage of his/her sentence, s/he has no right to be given any reason for unfavorable decisions and no right to know the make-up of the LSRB.

"The Campaign for Lifers has six proposals: abolition of indeterminate sentences; the right to legal representation at the review; the right to know the reason for unfavorable decisions; the publication of objective criteria for release; the ending of secret reports; the right to challenge the make-up of the LSRB.

"We, the prisoners and our relatives would appeal to people to actively support the six proposals, write to foreign and domestic political representatives and ask them to take the plight of Britain's political hostages up with the British government."∞

Solidarity With the Hungerstrike

Starting today, Sep
Communist Party (reco
Fascist Group), impriso
Narvaez Ternero, Juan J
have begun a hungerstri
we may use later, we sup
oned at El Acebuche (Al
as to demand an end to
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Hunger Strike in Spain

PCE(r) and GRAPO prisoners at Almeria on

September 5, militants of the PCE(r) (Spanish Communist Party) and Grapo (First of October Anti-Communist Group) at Soria prison, Telmo Varela, Antonio Donoso Pulido and Francisco Cela Seoane. Using this form of struggle, as well as others, we support the hungerstrike by our comrades imprisoned in Almeria) to gain decent living conditions, as well as to end the repressive measures that the government, the Ministry of Justice and the Interior and the General Council of Prisons has put into effect against us.

For more than 2 years, the PSOE (the ruling socialist party) has been putting measures into operation against all the political prisoners — dispersal and extermination. The ETA comrades and ourselves have already been dispersed to 83 out of a total 87 prisons that exist in Spain. Recently, the architects of this plan have stated that the dispersal is "practically finished." They are moving into a new phase — to equalize the political prisoners with the common prisoners under the classification procedures. This is to disarticulate us politically, and blackmail us with the threats of "social reintegration" — or extermination.

One of the main objectives behind this PSOE policy: to be able to control all political prisoners by 1992., and to demonstrate to all its European partners, how consolidated it is; to pressure our political organizations to accept its objectives; and to leave the most radical and popular movements without the reference of political prisoners signify, so that people become more easily accept the exploitative and repressive measures. These measures are only a small part of the repression that the PSOE is presenting in the next general elections.

Our political prisoners will not accept the blackmail of the government, are we going to let them kill us without resistance? At the present time, the repressive measures

against us, in particular against the imprisoned militants of the PCE(r) and GRAPO, have become so extreme that we find it necessary to even put our own lives in danger to better our living conditions here inside. Many of our comrades (at Almeria, Carabanchel - Women's prison...) are in permanent isolation; our women comrades in Castellon have been put in isolation after they were first severely beaten; visiting with our families has been reduced to a few minutes. Here in Soria prison, as in other prisons generally, they have begun to impose restrictions that prevent communications with friends, even those who have always visited. Police officials are now posted at the prison entrance and harass our families, and our living and working space has been reduced to half of what it was.

The gravest situation exists at Almeria prison, where the comrades have been held in isolation cells for almost a year. Visiting has been reduced to 10 minutes weekly for direct family members only. No longer are friends permitted to visit; and recently the prison has tried to separate these



comrades by placing them in different cell blocks (units) within the prison itself. This extreme situation has caused our comrades to consider their own states of health as secondary even though they have all participated in numerous hungerstrikes and have been physically affected. They have adopted this form of struggle. We reaffirm our solidarity with these comrades and the hungerstrike. We will not yield to or accept the new space restriction or the restrictions on communications and visiting to this prison.

Stop the Repression!

Solidarity with the Political Prisoners!

Political prisoners of the PCE(r), GRAPO and a libertarian — Soria 9/5/89 ∞

Ontario Guards Protect Themselves

by Bulldozer

Prisoners in the Ontario jail system were the pawns when the guards, members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), and the provincial government engaged in a round of lock-downs, lock-outs and walk-outs for 5 days in late October. Guards at the Hamilton-Wentworth regional jail, just west of Toronto, began the action by locking-down the prisoners to protest what they said were threats to their health and safety caused by the overcrowding of provincial jails by up to 25 per cent.

The job actions spread quickly to other areas of the province as guards booked in sick, worked to rule or refused to work under the Health and Safety Act which allows all workers but prison guards to refuse to work under unsafe conditions. The government locked-out the Hamilton-Wentworth guards and suspended others after being granted an injunction which ruled that the lockdown of the prisoners and the other job actions constituted a strike which is forbidden the guards under provincial law. They have been working without a contract since last December.

The prisoners, who were generally forgotten during this whole episode, protested the lock-down by blocking toilets, setting small fires and generally making lots of noise. Tensions have been running high throughout the whole provincial system. There were several small riots and work refusals during the summer as increased commissary prices made life inside even bleaker. It seems only inevitable that it will take a major riot to make any impact on the system. The guards, walking a dangerous line, used the threat of riots in their struggle with their employer.

Overcrowding is a danger to both prisoners and guards. In the early eighties, the union local at the infamous Toronto Don Jail released a report on overcrowding which recommended that the solution was not to build more jails, but to release prisoners who were there for non-violent crimes and to quit locking them up. Unfortunately there was no evidence of such a progressive attitude this time. The guards were concerned only with their own interests. They even went so far as to say that they were doing a life sentence as well, a thirty year stretch. They say that the stress of the job results in them

dying early even by working class norms. The normal alienation of the thirty-year-job is destructive enough, knowing that one is giving up control of one's life for an endless pursuit of the good life. But combine that with the misery, despair and just plain nastiness of jail life that on some level has been chosen, and one can understand why they conk out young.

The union and the province buried the problem momentarily in the usual way by agreeing to study the matter further. But meetings between government and union bureaucrats will not get at the real problem. The union understands quite clearly that the war on drugs has added to the already intolerable situation inside the jails. This "war" is little more than a race war directed against the African-Caribbean people. Taking advantage of the anti-drug hysteria which has seeped across the border from the U.S., the police, media and politicians have all decided that the imprisonment of thousands of more people was a small price to pay for the greater glory and profits of saving society from the twin evils of drugs and Black youth. The guards are just one more element in a whole system of repression that is involved in this war and they want a chunk of the spoils: better pay and more jobs for their members. ∞

Freedom Now *continued from page 4*

staked out for itself rather than just leaping for it. Circumstances indicate that it is presently incapable of attending to the issue of political prisoners as a national organization in an effective manner without doing so.

If FN insists on following its current marginal and meandering course of adhering to a narrow and exclusionary view of political prisoners, the least that principle demands is that: it cease using political prisoner as a generic term as if those it "adopts" are the only ones in the American Gulag who qualify for the status; it identify itself as a partisan organization representing its political prisoners, not all of them; it either refrain from dropping anyone from any future editions of *Can't Jail the Spirit* or change the name of the book to reflect the fact that it is a new and different publication based on FN's and only FN's new description of political prisoners. ∞

Israeli Regime to Expand Palestinian Prison

The Israeli regime is expanding its notorious prison camp in the Negev desert to make room for 1,200 more Palestinian prisoners. Meanwhile, camp [prisoners] appealed to Israeli and world opinion "for the immediate closure" of the camp.

The inhuman conditions at the Ketziot camp have been condemned from the outset, with groups like Amnesty International scoring it as trampling on human rights. Currently, there are a reported 4,400 prisoners in the camp, a majority of them held without charges. Prisoners are crammed into tents surrounded by multiple wire fences. The desert heat regularly goes beyond 100 degrees Fahrenheit. There is a shocking absence of proper food, sanitation facilities, and medical care. In their appeal, published September 1, the prisoners liken the facility to the concentration camps of Europe in World War II.

Recalling two confrontations in which guards injured and killed several prisoners, the letter said that the prisoners are being subjected to merciless pressure and that this is now reaching unprecedented levels. They warn that if it continues, the previous confrontations "will look like minor outbreaks compared to the total outbreak we will all witness."

They point to the lack of toilet and shower facilities, lack of medication, deprivation of reading materials and radios, and the denial of adequate food and water. They declare they want food "separated from politics, as food is a legal right to all living beings."

Reprinted from *The Militant*, 6/Oct/89

International Notes *continued from page 7*

apparatus, an example being the fact that about 2/3 of the locked-down population of Marion is non-white while less than half of those in the pre-transfer unit are. But that will not be all: the event is not to be—and hasn't been in the past—merely a marking of a continuing dirty deed. It will be a working gathering toward developing consciousness and action that will eliminate it and its clones.

CONVERSION : The priorities of the Republican administration of Illinois governor Jim Thompson were revealed when it was announced on 6/Oct/89 that the state would spend \$8 million to convert a former high school into a minimum and possibly medium security prison in East St. Louis. Given the power of education to help people avoid imprisonment, we should be hearing about the latter being turned into the former. ∞

PNS Editors: Bill Dunne, 10916-086, P.O.
Box 1000, Marion, IL. 62959, and Jim
Campbell, Bulldozer, P.O. Box 5052, Sta. A,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Correction:

David Gilbert was the author of the article in last issue about AIDS myths in prison. We neglected to credit him in our enthusiasm to finish the issue. In the next issue we will be updating information concerning AIDS in prisons in general and safety procedures in particular.

Back issues of Bulldozer #8 are available. Though it is four years old, the issues dealt with in the last issue of Bulldozer magazine are still relevant. Write to us at POB 5052, Sta A, Toronto, Ont. Canada M5W 1W4. Non-prisoners include a dollar for postage if you can.

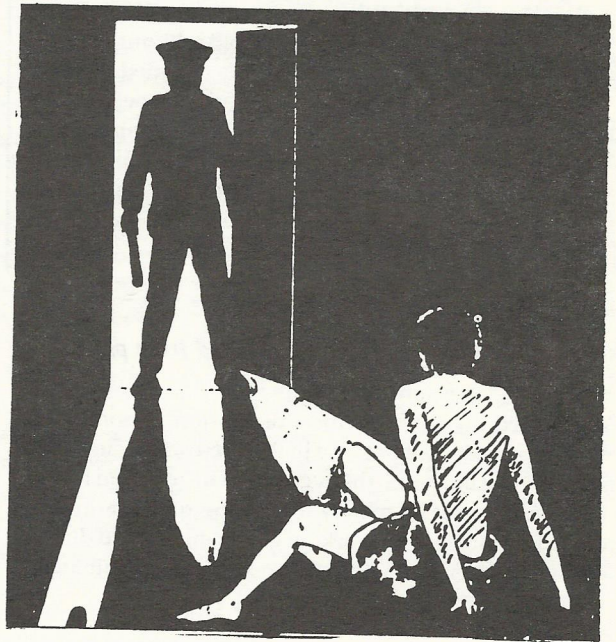
The Marionette

September-October 1989

Number 45

Another One Bites the Dust

On 27/Oct/89, the lockdown of USP Marion passed into its seventh year. The passage of time, however, has not rendered the "concentration model" prison any less an instrument of oppression, Dungeon Marion is still a place where the repressive apparatus of the U.S. ruling class engages in destructive experiments in social manipulation and control. The overt brutality has receded from a common characteristic of the daily reality of Marion lockdown to more of a threat that enforces prisoner's consciousness of their powerlessness. But that does not signify progress: the threat needs occasional demonstration, and reports indicate that coercive and gratuitous physical abuse of prisoners in the segregation unit has escalated over the past year. And the even more onerous psychological torment that has pervaded Marion subsistence since the lockdown continues unabated. While it may have changed in small details, there has been no amelioration of its major elements. Verily, the situation has deteriorated as is illustrated by increasing population and longer average stays.



Everything about the Marion lockdown contradicts its alleged purposes of decreasing violence in other prisons and allowing them to be operated more openly. The Bureau of Prisons has advanced no credible support for the notion that violence has decreased as a result of the lockdown — even assuming that its statistics could be trusted in the face of all the official lies surrounding Marion. Nor has it supplied any information to counter the fact that the lockdown has served to drag other prisoners toward its repressive extreme rather than allowing them to be more open. Moreover, the Bureau of Prisons has been unable to show how depriving prisoners of work, education, adequate recreation, and other congregate activities — in short, all the positive human endeavors whose absence has been demonstrated to

have negative consequences — can but worsen those problems instead of alleviating them. Yet the prisonrats pursue their draconian policies at Marion, in the process revealing their ulterior motives even as they deny them.

Officialdom endlessly reiterates its tired old lies about all Marion prisoners being vicious and predatory fiends who have perpetrated acts of violence in other prisons "the worst of the worst". The transparency and repeated refutation of those lies are outweighed for the apparatchiks by their utility. Such a horrific vision of Marion victims — which, even if true, would not justify their counterproductive mistreatment — makes it eas-

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A Filthy Disease at Marion

During the night of 8-9/Sep, a large number of prisoners were suddenly stricken with severe cramps, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, chills, fever, and head and body aches. Official estimates are that 140 prisoners were afflicted, but are likely low. The illness was completely debilitating for about 24 hours and then tapered off. Some prisoners did not eat for two days or feel completely well for a week. All of the prisoners were taken ill over the same 16-hour period, most within a few hours of each other. There was no secondary occurrence or repetition of the epidemic.

Medical response was meager. A physician's assistant visited the ranges the next day with some pills and denials of knowledge of what the sickness was. Blood samples were taken from some prisoners, and some were asked to provide stool and urine samples - which were not collected for days. Guards said that there was no pattern to the incidence of the malady with some tiers having many victims and others having very few. They also said that no guards had come down with the ailment.

The official report of the epidemic was released on 14/Sep in a memorandum by Health Services Administrator Terry Finnegan. Though the symptoms of the sickness were virtually identical to those of food poisoning, the memo absolved prison food. The official version also claimed that some 40 guards had been afflicted, contradicting statements by the guards the day after the sickness hit. Warden Gary Henman himself later claimed to have experienced mild symptoms. With some medical mumbo-jumbo, "acute gastroenteritis was diagnosed; a self limiting condition" in Finnegan's memorandum. No cause was given.

The exoneration of the show as the source of the illness rings hollow. The Health Services Administrator said that the tests allegedly performed were not done by the lab that had made so many mistakes during the Giardia infestation of this spring (see Marionettes #43 & 44), but could not demonstrate the reliability of or even say for sure who conducted the alleged tests. The suggestion that the epidemic was some sort of flu (and letting the matter rest at that) is also incredible given the virulence of the sickness and its concurrent incidence.

More likely is that the Marion administration wants to cover up its substandard food service. This was the third incidence of a filth-induced, food borne epidemic this year, not to mention a lot of smaller discomforts that could be similarly ascribed. It is apparently part of the more sophisticated government torture that has, according to local Judge Foreman, made the rack and thumbscrew obsolete that Marion prisoners be subjected to food and water poisoning. ∞

Wonderful Water

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is still insisting that water supplied to USP Marion from a lake contaminated by an EPA Superfund toxic dumpsite is just fine. To bolster that case in court, it hired a Chicago engineering firm to test the prison water. It still refuses to let anyone hired by prisoner's lawyers conduct similar tests. The government's engineers found no measurable quantities of pollutants (of course!) except iron (makes the water brownish) and possibly manganese (makes the water smell bad), neither of which cause illness, it is said. There has yet to be an explanation of the refusal to allow engineers for plaintiff prisoners to test the water, itself inexplicable since their findings could be dispositive in the litigation.

That litigation, a lawsuit against providing contaminated water initiated over five years ago by a prisoner now dead of cancer, still languishes in the local federal court. It is stalled pending a ruling on the government's motion to dismiss based on its assertion, now backed by affidavits from its engineers, that it isn't violating anyone's rights by supplying contaminated water because the water isn't necessarily contaminated. Discovery (requiring the government to provide relevant information/access) is stayed awaiting the ruling, a blatant demonstration of the court's bias. Denying plaintiff's experts and attorneys access to the information necessary to contest the issue means that the ruling can only be a one-sided denial of due process.

According to intelligence gathered by a lawyer for the prisoners, there are plans afoot to change Marion's

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Marionnotes

BRUTALITY: According to reports from Marion's segregation unit, physical abuse is escalating there. Lt. Trammel and his henchies have been increasingly subjecting prisoners to needless beatings on slim pretexts. Those apparently most at risk are Cuban detainees and people who are "laying down", refusing to go through the Marion "program". The abuse appears part of an effort to make the hole more oppressive to discourage the growing number of "lay downs". It also focuses on those least able to complain or elicit outside attention and sympathy due to their isolation. And some staff undoubtedly get their jollies from it. Racial harassment: Recently reported was that the foreman of the Marion industries program for pre-transfer prisoners (? Livesay, brother of the former foreman of a coroner's jury that turned a Marion suicide into murder per Marion officials' statements and was subsequently hired as a guard) has been harassing Muslim prisoners. His tactic is to reduce their pay grade to the lowest level for the heinous crimes like having a shirttail out on the way to lunch from work. At the time of the report, Muslim prisoners had been the only victims of this form of harassment.

FOOD FOLLIES: In September/October, both quality and quantity of Marion chow deteriorated markedly. Some officials denied the deterioration, but others admitted it, claiming that end-of-fiscal year budget limitations and not-their-fault-slowness of new money in making its way onto food trays. The warden said that the BOP told him he was feeding too much and to cut back but that he refused (and he can't lie in his official capacity, right?), the implication being that prisoners are getting better than they have coming. If he'd just call food "security", we'd be catered by Cordon Bleu tomorrow.

BIG BROTHER SPEAK: During October, local media carried a number of reports about Marion unprecedented in recent years. In all of them, Marion officials lamented how the prison wasn't designed for use as a super-max, and that it would have to be replaced as such. This was a drastic departure from past propaganda that extolled how well Marion was working and had it as absolutely impossible to ever open up. Presumably, the Marioncrats are angling to have a new max

built here but have to reprogram staff and community that Marion is not, after all, the New Alcatraz.

MORE SLOW-PLAY: The local federal district court seems to be intensifying its efforts to discourage litigation by Marion prisoners. Though by no means new, the tactic of sitting on prisoner petitions without action and for no reason is becoming more blatant. Sometimes it is even done in violation of applicable rules and law. When called by an attorney, the court clerk readily admitted that such delays were quite common. This obstruction demonstrates the court's view of justice for prisoners. It is also yet another illustration that rights are only certain for those with the power to enforce them or the money to buy some. ∞

Water *continued from page 13*

water supply to another, much more distant lake in the next calendar year. On 11/Oct/89, Marion Warden Henman denied that report and said that instead the BOP had approved and budgeted a plan for the drilling of wells on the prison property. He said that only the letting of the contract remained, and that the wells should be operational by June or July of 1990. But the last warden sang that song, too. No one has yet explained why there is any thought of changing the water supply if the present one is safe. ∞

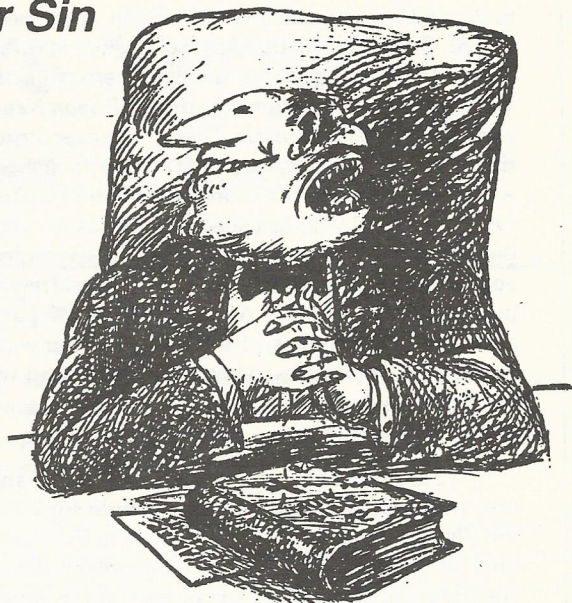
Marionette Editor: Bill Dunne, #10916-086, POB 1000, Marion, IL 62959. Articles not otherwise attributed were written by me. Readers of *Prison News Service* and *The Marionette* (PNS/M) are free to reprint or otherwise use the information presented in them — verily, they are encouraged to do so. Comments are welcome. Donations should be sent to the Bulldozer Collective, POB 5052, Stn A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5W 1W4, which handles reproduction and distribution.

And if you don't like the news, go out and make some of your own.

Sin for Sin

On 24/Oct/89, Jim Bakker of the right-wing, fundamentalist religious organization PTL was sentenced to 45 years in prison and a \$500,000 fine for frauds associated with his TV evangelism empire. This was only roughly a third of the time and a few percent of the fines he could have been given. The only reason that the sentence was as severe as it is, was because right-wing fundamentalism is only on the outer edges of the establishment and Bakker's crimes were too strident and gaudy and public.

Nevertheless, before the ink was even dry on Bakker's judgement and commitment, establishment pontificators were publicly musing that the sentence was too much. After all, poor Jimmy only swindled masses of poor and working people who didn't know any better out of hard earned savings they could ill-afford to lose, not to mention their faith in the comforting religious mythology that ameliorates the pain of their exploitation and oppression. Of course, they



should be (should have been) the ones to deal with Bakker and his ilk instead of allowing or expecting the repressive apparatus to do it; contradictions like this in so using the apparatus make it apparent why.

Grand Jury *continued from page 6*

they want." The grand jury has virtually unlimited ability to interrogate witnesses. He warned that the activism of the AIDS movement and perhaps the reproductive rights movement could make them grand jury targets in the future.

A motion was filed on behalf of the two men to quash the subpoena. The process was strung out for ten weeks. When they finally got to court, the motion was brushed aside. But the 3 month term for the grand jury was virtually over, so the immediate threat was gone; though new juries can be empanelled at any time.

The response always varies when the grand jury comes knocking. Though many people rationalize cooperation and others are simply intimidated or else self-interested, it seems clear that non-cooperation is the only way. Bortman and Wells were able to stop what could have been a fishing expedition through the anti-racist movement. The accompanying letter in their support gives the reasons why it was necessary that they act as they did. It is good to be able to say that their strength and determination was victorious. ∞

The pontificators falsely made it appear that Bakker was more harshly treated than the media's great satans — "violent" criminals like robbers — by comparing his **sentence** to the time they actually serve and without making any distinction between actual and statutory violence. And what is the difference between extorting something by threatening someone with fire and brimstone and threatening them with a firearm? ∞

Another Year *continued from page 12*

ier to legitimize their particular oppression. It makes it easier to conduct anti-popular experimentation and expand dangerous precedents that will do injury far beyond Marion. These will be used against an ever more deprived and two tier populace as its exploited majority becomes increasingly restive and politicized and inclined to resist its victimization. "Final solutions" always start with the use of special repression like "concentration models" against small and especially vilified minorities like "the worst of the worst". But they never stop there. ∞

The *Prison News Service/Marionette* intends to expand both in size and circulation in the near future. Currently the Bulldozer collective and Bill Dunne are working out the details of the expansion. We will add more sections to current *Prison News Service* and *the Marionette*. Though the exact criteria for the new sections have yet to be established, we will be looking for more contributors in the future. Anyone who has specific ideas as to what they would like to see included in the expanded version should write to either of the addresses included at the bottom. And if you already have articles on prison issues, please send them our way. If possible, send copies to both addresses. And we certainly need graphics, so if you doodle, send some of them along.

We are also looking for people, both inside and out, who would like to receive multiple copies of the *PNS/M* in order to distribute them in their local area or increase circulation in their prison. Postal costs are one of our major expenses and it is much cheaper per copy to mail 4 or more copies to the same address. Anyone writing regularly to prison-

ers are particularly encouraged to receive additional copies in order to forward them to their prisoner correspondents. Anyone doing bulk distribution of literature into prisons should just let us know how many copies you could use.

We are slowly dealing with some of the problems of computer accessibility and compatibility. Recent changes in our methods of work should allow us to have it in the mail by the twentieth of the month. The changes will be slow but steady. But they will raise costs. If you can contribute, it will be much appreciated.

We ask anyone supporting a particular struggle around prison or repression more generally to place both Dunne and Bulldozer on your mailing lists. And it would be good if magazines with which we exchange check to see if Bill Dunne is on your list since he compiles much of the information for this publication. The addresses once again are: Bill Dunne, #10916-086, POB 1000, Marion, IL 62959; Bulldozer, POB 5052, Stn A, Toronto, Ont. M5W 1W4. ∞

Police *continued from page 5*

sponse to the needs of assaulted or threatened women that is the problem, but the fact that police rape too, and rather often. This was highlighted earlier this year by the suicide of Robin Voce. Voce was raped by two cops in a cruiser in 1984 after she had requested that they take her to a women's hostel. When the case finally came to a police tribunal earlier this year, Voce's reputation and private life were dragged through the media in a manner now illegal in criminal prosecutions for sexual assault. The two cops were acquitted of rape and merely convicted of having sex while on duty. Voce's suicide is as much a police murder as if the cops had drawn their guns on her at the time of the rape (something they may well have done.)

Metro-Toronto area police are running out of control, despite sometimes sincere attempts by a reformist City council to curb some of the abuses. In the last one and a half years, besides the Cook shooting, the Voce suicide and the Lawson murder, Metro-area police have shot dead one other Black man, Lester Donaldson, and

beaten to death two white men, Gardiner Myers and John Newman. Never mentioned in the media is the fact that Tremblay, one of the cops who raped Voce, was also in on the fatal beating of Myers. And this is in addition to the police violence and official negligence in dealings with oppressed peoples across Canada and the general and increasing attempts to criminalize whole communities in Toronto under the guise of the war on drugs.

Although Bulldozer would like to see the total abolition of the police, we support the community's efforts to control the worst of their excesses. The police are on the front lines of racism in Canada and the so-called war on drugs is their battleground; created by the state in order to control and marginalize oppressed and potentially dissident elements in the community. We are encouraged by the diversity of the women's coalition: from lesbians to labour unionists, anarchists to reformists, women are uniting against the common enemy and respecting each other's autonomy and diversity. Bulldozer will continue to work as part of this coalition and with other movements to end the abuses of the police, prisons and other parts of the just-us system, and hasten the ending of the system itself. ∞